

Connors: Owners should pay for beach fixes

Surf City may consider ordinance at special meeting

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— Mayor Leonard Connors wants the Borough Council to adopt an ordinance that would make oceanfront property owners pay the cost of emergency sand replacement on their properties, Connors said Tuesday.

Connors said the borough must conduct extensive repairs along a section of beach between 18th and 24th streets, and he hopes the ordinance could be in effect to pay for some of that work in addition to future beach fixes. However, he stressed that individual property owners would be required to pay only for the placement of sand needed on their property and not for sand placed elsewhere.

The mayor added that the Borough Council may hold a special session to discuss the ordinance before its next scheduled meeting on March 8. Connors said the new law is needed whether or not the long-awaited beach replenishment project begins as planned.

"Whether or not this federal project goes through, this municipality is not going to be left having to pay for emergency appropriations and beach fill that's going to go on private property," Connors said.

The charge for sand and the placement of sand would appear as an added assessment on the tax bill of the property owner, according to Connors. He said he wanted to have a meeting of all the Long Beach Island mayors in which he would present the ordinance so the other municipalities could adopt a similar one if their governing bodies wished to do so.

Long Beach Township Mayor DiAnne Gove said she would attend such a meeting and that charging property owners for fixes to their property is something the township has considered in the past. Earlier this year, the township had to conduct emergency repairs in Brant Beach to fix erosion, for which the Township Commission approved \$150,000.

Connors said the fact that he is seeking the new law has nothing to do with the ongoing controversy over beach access easements in Surf City and elsewhere on the island. The state and federal governments are requiring oceanfront property owners to grant easements before work on the beach-replenishment project begins. Officials insist that the easements are necessary to complete the work, but many oceanfront owners have resisted, citing concerns ranging from unanswered questions about the easement agreements to the possible effects of new dunes on views.

Some owners have said they are particularly upset over state Department of Environmental Protection requirements of public-access points every quarter-mile and the construction of parking lots with restroom facilities as part of the beach-replenishment project.